

Choice Literature.

MISS GILBERT'S CAREER.

CHAPTER XVII.—PHILOSOPHICAL, BUT IMPORTANT TO THE STORY, AND THEREFORE TO BE READ.

To the long winter which followed these startling and closely-crowded disasters, Arthur, in after years, always looked back as the most delightful and fruitful of his early life. He was called upon to contrive for those who could not contrive for themselves—to find work for those who, tied to the Run by dependent families, could not go away freely to seek their fortunes elsewhere. He won to himself the gratitude and the prayers of the helpless. Joslyn and Chéek were provided for in Crampton, the latter obtaining the much-coveted situation of driver of the Crampton coach. Others were furnished with situations in distant villages.

Bound no longer to the vicinity of the mill, he again took up his lodgings at home. There, in the daily presence of her to whom he had once given his idolatrous love, he learned how stronger than the strongest will is the power of submission. It was by almost a fiercely persistent power of will that Dr. Gilbert overcame his passion for Mary Hammett; and, though he accomplished his object, he never met her without feeling that he had been wounded and terribly tried. Arthur, with no conscious exercise of will, submitted—accepted the decision made against him—and was at peace. From her high position in his imagination, Mary Hammett never fell. On the contrary, she was advanced to a still higher plane, where his dreams of possession did not venture to intrude. He was her disciple. She became to him an inspirer and a guide. In the atmosphere of her noble womanhood, his own best manhood found nourishment and growth. Never, for one moment, allowing his old passion for her to rise, his reserve in her presence all wore away, and she, instinctively apprehending the condition of his mind, became to him the elder sister that he needed.

She led him into new fields of thought. They read books together, and talked about them. Gradually he felt himself advancing into a larger realm of life. His powers, under so genial a sun, developed themselves grandly, often surprising, by their scope and style of demonstration, the fair minister who, with earnest purpose, was striving to feed the fountain from which they sprang. It was her constant aim to bring his mind into contact with the minds of others, that new avenues might be established through which nutriment might reach him, and that he might gain not only a juster estimate of his own powers, but of his own deficiencies.

Under this happy nurture, his old thoughts of doing something in the world and something for the world began to revive. He felt stirring within him prophecies of a future not altogether like the past. He felt his nature spreading into broader sympathies with humanity, and was conscious of enlarging power to follow in the tracks of those sympathies with a hearty ministry of good.

The earth sees no spectacle more beautiful than that of a completed womanhood, looking, by its delicate insight, into the depths of a half-developed manhood, and striving to stimulate and nourish and harmonize powers that it knows and feels will some time rise above itself, and become, in return, its source of inspiration. Mary Hammett had a thorough comprehension of the material she had in hand. She saw its high possibilities—saw and knew that they were beyond her own. She thoroughly apprehended the nature and the limits of her mission. She felt that her work would be short, but believed that it would be fruitful.

There was one subject discussed by this amiable pair that always touched Arthur profoundly. It was one proposed in a passage of the letter of the young woman to him, already in the reader's possession. Those words: "If I have had this influence upon you, through your love for me, what shall be the influence of Him who has room in His heart for all the hearts that have ever throbbed, or ever shall throb in the world!"—came often to Arthur in his hours of leisure, as if some angel had recorded them upon a scroll, and waited always to read them to him when he could hear. It was a subject which, in their conversations, was never thrust upon the young man by his Christian-hearted mentor; but it was one which so interused her whole life that all her thought was coloured by it.

It was through these conversations that Arthur caught his first glimpses of the beauty and the loveliness of a divine life—a life parallel to, and, in its measure, identical with, the life of God—a life above the plane of selfishness, radiant from a heart induced and informed with love for God and man. Toward this life his discipline had led him. He had schooled his powers and passions to self-control. He had subordinated his own life to the life of others, by motives of natural affection and manly duty. He had submitted to a decision that placed for ever beyond his possession the object of his fondest worship. All this had led him heavenward; it was for his companion to point him to the door. It was for her to speak to him of the duty of consecration, and of the charm of that life whose gracious issues are beneficence, and healing, and everlasting happiness.

Let the veil be dropped upon those experiences of a great, strong heart, adjusting itself through prayerful scrutiny and careful thought, to a scheme of life above itself—a scheme brought down from heaven by Jesus Christ! Let no intrusion be made upon the calm joy of a soul when first it determines to give its life for ever to God and men, to law and love, and feels itself in harmony with the spirit and economy of the universe, and knows that its life can only tend, in this world and in coming worlds, to blessed consummations!

Miss Fanny Gilbert was, of course, frequently a member of the social circle in Mrs. Blague's quiet dwelling; and though Arthur had been through most of her girl's life her beau-ideal of young manhood, she never lost occasion, when alone with Mary Hammett, good naturedly, though very perversely, to quarrel about him. She professed herself un-

able to understand how a young man who was truly manly could fail to be ambitious, and how, being ambitious, he could patiently subject himself and subordinate his life to those who were beneath him. If she were a man, she was sure that she should die, if obliged to do what Arthur Blague had done, and was still doing. If she were a young man like him she would not remain in Crampton a day. It seemed to her that Arthur was very much more like a woman than a man.

Miss Hammett's line of defence was that Arthur was acquiring his education, under a master whose name was Necessity; that, like all decent young men, he was tractable and patient under authority; that out of honourable subjection and self-control springs always the highest power to subject and control others, and that he had not got his growth. It was her theory that a soul in its development needed time as much as nutriment—that its growth could never be hurried to its advantage. Trees live alike upon the earth and upon the atmosphere, and cannot be too much forced at the root without destroying the proper relations between those visible and invisible influences which contribute to feed it. There is an atmosphere around each soul, as there is around each tree, and this God takes care of as He does the air, and only in a measured time can the soul gather from it what it contains of nourishment. The soul, therefore, must have time for growth, or grow unsoundly. The soul's sympathies are the soul's foliage, and only when the just relations exist between sympathetic absorption and the direct imbibition of the nutrient juices does the soul grow strongly and healthily. The prime condition of such a growth as this is time. Storms must wrestle with it. Winds must breathe through it. Rains must descend upon it, year after year. In darkness and in light it must stand and absorb, even though it be unconsciously, those elements that minister to its forces and its fibre. A soul thus growing will become larger and more beautiful than when forced at the root, beyond the power of absorption in the leaves.

Fanny admitted the ingenuity of the reasoning, and believed in its soundness more thoroughly than she was willing to confess; but it was directly opposite to the theory of education she had received from her father. With him, education consisted in the acquisition from books of the accepted facts of science and philosophy. The quicker this could be done the better. That student who should the most readily and the most expeditiously acquire the knowledge contained in a given number and variety of books was, in his estimate, the best scholar; and he only could be an educated man who should secure the particular knowledge prescribed by the schools. It was in this way that his daughter Fanny had been educated. With a mind that acquired with wonderful facility she had distanced all her associates and exhausted the resources of her schools before she had arrived at full womanhood. The idea that sound growth required time had never occurred to him at all; and he had determined upon putting his little boy through the same course that his daughter had pursued. He was to be urged, fired and fretted with ambition, taught to labour for the prizes and honours of scholarship, and brought into life as soon as possible.

Notwithstanding this clash of theories, and Miss Gilbert's respect for that of her father, there was something in that of the schoolmistress which gave her serious thought. It somehow united itself with the words of the reviewer which had so deeply impressed her. She felt more than ever that she needed more life—that she needed time—that there was something which time would give her that she could obtain by no means within her province and power to institute. She did not understand how she could grow without direct feeding; but she saw before her a woman, evidently her superior through the ministry of time. She did not recognize in Mary Hammett powers and acquisitions that outreached her own, but she apprehended a harmony, maturity and poise, to which she could lay no claim. So, as she said when she finished reading the review of "Tristram Trevelyan," "Hurrah for life!" she concluded her reflections upon Mary Hammett's theories by the exclamation, "More time, then!"

There was one influence in Arthur's quiet home-life that his expanding nature drank as the flower drinks the dew. Little Jamie, his brother, a beautiful little boy, was a constant source of delight to the young man. When the little fellow had reached his second birthday, there was not a more precious and charming specimen of childhood in Crampton. Arthur carried him out in his limited walks, took care of him at night, and with even more than motherly patience bore with his petulance when ill, and his natural restlessness when well. The attachment between those two brothers, so widely divided by years, was the theme of general remark. Miss Hammett saw it with delight, and Miss Gilbert looked on with astonishment, admitting that it was all very beautiful, but very unaccountable. It seemed more womanly than anything she had seen in Arthur, and she saw few things that did not bear that complexion.

To Arthur, the opening of that little soul upon the realities of existence, the unfolding of its budding affections, the fresh simplicity of a nature newly from the Creating Hand, the perfect faith and trust of a heart that had never been deceived, the artless prattle of lips that knew no guile, the wonderful questions born of childish wonder, were like angels' food. Out of that little cup of life he drank daily nectar. He never tired of its flavour—never thrust it rudely away from him. The child almost forsook its mother in its love for the strong arms and great heart of its brother. In this sweet affection and wonderful intimacy, there was a prophecy of the future which Arthur could not read. Could he have done it, he would have sunk on the threshold of life, and prayed to die. Ah! blessed darkness, that rests upon each step that lies before us in the future! Ah! blessed faith, that frankly gives its hand to Providence, and walks undoubting on!

It was impossible for Miss Hammett to mingle so freely in the society of Arthur and Fanny, without thinking of them sometimes in the relation of lovers. She knew both sufficiently well to see that they did not understand each

other. She knew that Fanny was far more accomplished than Arthur; yet she knew that Arthur had powers under whose shadow even Fanny would at some future day delight to sit. When Mary talked with Arthur about his ambitious friend, he always had quite as many objections to her as she was in the habit of expressing in regard to him. He could not love a woman who wanted the praise of the world. Such a woman could only be fit for the world's wife. He pitied any man who would consent to be known to the world as the husband of an ambitious and bepraised notability. Mother Hubbard's dog was a very insignificant individual. Besides, he disliked a "blue," and not only disliked her, but was afraid of her.

Mary Hammett tried to argue Arthur out of notions like these, not because she was anxious to contrive a match between her friends, but because she felt that Arthur was doing Fanny injustice; but she could make no impression on him. He declined to reason on the subject, and declared he had no prejudices upon it. He could only say that he felt as he did because he could not help it. There was something in her position and in her aims that offended him. He thought her a woman of genius, admired her powers, delighted in the vivacity of her conversation, and felt himself stimulated by her presence; but the idea of loving and wedding her was repulsive to him.

Throughout this season of active and productive social life, Mary Hammett was haunted by a single fear—a fear that obtruded itself upon all her hours of retirement, and often came upon her with a pang when in the presence of her friends. She knew that the villain who had defrauded her out of her earnings, and who had wound up his career in Crampton by the wholesale robbery of his employer and the betrayal of his daughter, would exhaust his money. She knew, too, that even the large sum he had on hand would furnish him with food for his vices but a short time. She felt certain that his first resort would be the price of her betrayal. She had no doubt that her father would give him any reasonable sum he might claim for discovering to him her retreat. She felt, therefore, that her stay in Crampton was limited, and that any week might bring events that would cut her off forever from the companionships that had become so pleasant and precious to her.

She had fully contrived her plan of operations in the event which she so much feared, and when, at last, it came, she carried it into execution with better success than she had dared to expect.

CHAPTER XVIII.—MARY HAMMETT'S FATHER HAS A VERY EXCITING TIME IN CRAMPTON.

It was a pleasant Saturday night in August, when, as Mary Hammett sat at her window, she caught a glimpse of the Crampton coach as it drove into the village, raising its usual cloud of dust, and bearing its usual covering of the same material. On the back seat sat an elderly gentleman with his head down, and an altogether superfluous amount of material around his face. Mary could see but little and saw that only for a moment, but she was convinced that her day of trial had come. She could not be mistaken in the stout shoulders, the short neck, and the heavy eyebrows. She passed out of her room to get a better view of the passenger while he alighted at the hotel, and, though it was almost twilight, and the house at a considerable distance across the common, she was certain that her first impressions were correct.

She immediately returned to her room, and wrote a note to Dr. Gilbert, Aunt Catharine and Fanny, and despatched it by the hand of Arthur, requesting those friends to call upon her so soon as it should be dark. They came accordingly, wondering much at the singular form of the invitation, and curious to ascertain what it could mean. Mary met them in the parlour, and calling in Arthur Blague and his mother, closed the door and sat down before them, pale, faint and trembling. There was an expression of painful embarrassment upon her face, and Fanny, anxious to do something to relieve her, rose, and crossing the room, took a seat beside her on the sofa, and handed her a fan. Mary put the fan aside with a quiet "Thank you," and said: "My friends, I am sure that trouble lies just before me, and I want your advice."

"Certainly," responded Dr. Gilbert, promptly. "I'm sure we are all at your service."

"You have all been very kind to me," continued Mary, "for you have trusted me without knowing me, and received me as a friend without inquiring into my history. I wish to thank you for this, and to assure you that whatever may be the events of the next few days, I shall remember you with gratitude as long as I live."

There was a pause. Dr. Gilbert, exceedingly puzzled, sat and drummed upon the arms of his chair. It was all a mystery to him—her solemnity, her apprehension, and her allusion to imminent events of an unpleasant character. "Miss Hammett," said the doctor, "what do you mean? Who menaces you? Are you going to leave us?"

"I may be obliged to leave you for a time, at least," replied Mary, her eyes filling with tears.

"Who or what can drive you from Crampton?" said Dr. Gilbert, bringing his hand excitedly down upon the arm of his chair. "Let them deal with me. Unless there is some one who has a legal right to control you, I will stand between you and all harm."

"Dr. Gilbert," said Mary, trembling, "My father is in Crampton."

"Your father!" exclaimed all her auditors in concert.

"My father is in Crampton, and he is very, very angry with me."

"What is he angry with you for?" inquired Dr. Gilbert, that being the first question that rose to his lips.

"Because," said Mary, with strong feeling, "because I will not perjure myself."

"Let him lay his hand on you at his peril," said the doctor fiercely, again bringing his hand down upon the arm of his chair with a will.

"No, doctor, no; there must be no violence. I must get out of his way."

"Because you will not perjure yourself!" exclaimed